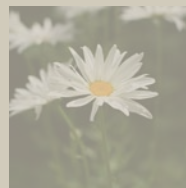
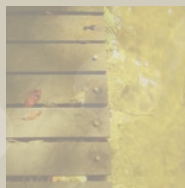
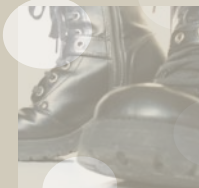


SPOTLIGHT ON PATH PRACTICES AND PROGRAMS

Program Focus:
PATH and Housing First



August 3, 2009



PATH

Projects for Assistance in
Transition from Homelessness

Acknowledgments

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Disclaimer

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Available: <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov>
<http://homeless.samhsa.gov>

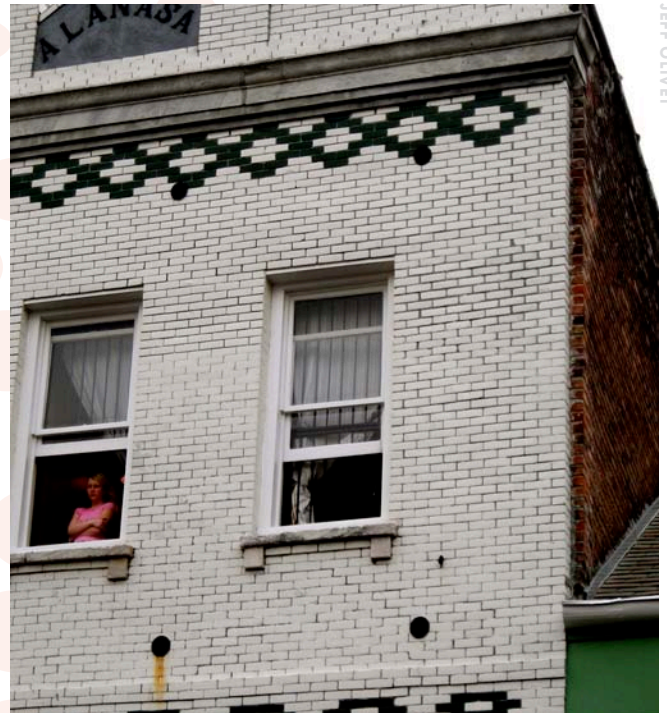
Contact: path@samhsa.hhs.gov

WHAT IS HOUSING FIRST?

The Housing First philosophy was built on a dramatic shift from the expectation that people had to be “housing ready,” (clean, sober, and psychiatrically stable) before housing was provided, to the provision of housing first followed by support needed for the individual to stabilize and maintain that housing. It is based on the notion that housing is a human right. Sam Tsemberis in New York was one of the pioneers of this movement during the 1990s, and the Pathways Housing First model has provided the field with experience and outcome data to create the support and momentum that the Housing First movement has today (Pathways to Housing, 2008).

Housing First programs aim to provide individuals with housing as quickly as possible. Once the individual is housed, the program focuses on case management and meeting the person’s service needs at their own pace. Housing First programs often aim to enroll the most difficult to reach individuals: people who have experienced chronic homelessness and have been unsuccessful in traditional housing, shelters, or other living situations. Housing First has been recognized by the U.S. Interagency Council on Homelessness as a best practice, and there is a plethora of Housing First information on its website—provided in the resource section of this document.

While there is no set model for what a Housing First program should look like, there are four elements to every Housing First program: 1) a focus on helping people obtain housing as quickly as possible, 2) providing a variety of services following the housing placement, 3) basing services on the individual’s desires and needs, and 4) not requiring engagement



in services in order to keep housing (National Alliance to End Homelessness, 2006). Some programs are contained in one building (fixed site) while others provide housing in units around a city or county (scattered site). Some programs may own or operate their own housing, while others work with landlords and housing managers. Staffing patterns vary across programs depending on the size, age, and funding sources. It is possible to start a small housing first program with only one effective case manager, but most develop quickly into programs that have entire teams such as the Assertive Community Treatment (ACT) model. Each mix of housing type and support services poses unique challenges and benefits that should be considered when designing a program or deciding what is most appropriate for an individual you are serving.

Oftentimes, Housing First programs have three requirements: 1) residents pay 30% of one's income toward rent, 2) people in the program must obey the terms of the lease, and 3) they must meet with a case manager regularly. The meetings with case managers may be simple and informal and designed to ensure safety and tenancy stability while building a relationship and offering and encouraging acceptance of additional services designed to assist individuals on their path to recovery and community integration. In the early stages, case managers typically provide assistance in accessing mainstream services, gaining employment, resources for food, or transportation to appointments. Services are delivered at the individual's pace, and the individual is not required to participate in any services that he or she does not agree to. Many programs have found that even if individuals are reluctant to accept mainstream services when they first enter housing, once they adjust to the new situation they often begin to express an interest in making positive changes in their lives.

Research indicates that Housing First produces dramatic cost savings. The cost of one night of housing at Pathways is \$57, compared to \$73 for a New York City Shelter, \$164 for a New York City Jail, \$467 for a State Psychiatric Hospital, and \$1,185 for a New York City Psychiatric Hospital (Pathways to Housing, 2007). Studies conducted by the Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance yielded similar results with an average cost savings of \$7,921 per person each year (Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance, 2007). Housing First programs are not only a more consumer-driven

and recovery-oriented option, they are also effective in keeping people in stable housing while reducing their use of more expensive environments such as hospitals, shelters, and jails.

Even though Housing First has been proven to be effective, it does not eliminate the need for transitional housing and emergency shelters. Some individuals, such as women fleeing domestic violence or individuals in substance abuse recovery, may prefer intensive transitional housing services or permanent supportive housing programs where they will have a higher level of support, structured meetings with individuals who share similar experiences, and an environment that is drug and alcohol free. Emergency shelters will continue to fill the need to move individuals and families off of the streets when a housing unit is not yet available. Housing First programs allow for transitional housing and emergency shelter programs to increase their capacity to serve those who will benefit from them most.

PATH and Housing First are a natural partnership. Although PATH programs are limited in their ability to assist financially with housing, PATH can provide the outreach as well as the initial case management and residential support services for those individuals moving into a Housing First program. Below you will find information about how five PATH Programs are supporting and partnering with Housing First, along with tips and ideas for starting and sustaining a Housing First program.

EXAMPLES OF HOW PATH PROGRAMS WORK WITH HOUSING FIRST

Eliot Community Human Services, Massachusetts

Housing First at Eliot Community Human Services has been evolving over the past two years. Currently, there are 10 subsidies for this Single Room Occupancy (SRO) fixed site program, which is staffed by a full time on-site case manager. Residents are allowed to stay in housing as long as they like, although many do chose to work towards “graduating” from the program.

PATH plays a role in identifying potential residents for the Eliot program. PATH Shelter Specialists work with shelter guests. Once they establish a relationship with a guest and have an understanding of his or her needs and goals, the PATH Shelter Specialists may recommend the guest for the Housing First program. PATH staff work in close partnership with the Housing First case manager as the individual moves into housing. For example, if a PATH worker is writing the narrative for an individual’s social security application, the case manager may provide transportation for the appointments. The case manager also taps into PATH staff to assist with issues that arise in the transition, specifically those related to the mental health expertise and interventions that PATH can provide.

Hamilton County, Ohio

Hamilton County was chosen as one of three programs to pilot Housing First in Ohio. This opportunity included visits and meetings with the Pathways Program over the course of a year and a trip to see one of the original Housing First programs in New York City. Hamilton County’s housing clusters apartments in various buildings throughout the city. Intensive case management, consisting of 3-5



I think what we are all struggling with now is that we know that housing is the key to ending homelessness, and supported housing is the way to go, but how do we pay for the services?... You have to have the right services to support people in housing, and you can do it in a lot of different ways.



— **Larry Gottlieb**

Director of Homeless and Outreach Services
Eliot Community Human Services, Massachusetts

visits a week, is provided. Individuals must agree to meet with the case managers at least twice a week and set goals. The program is developing an ACT model and partnering the ACT team with the PATH program for outreach services.

Two of the six PATH workers in Hamilton County are part of both the PATH and Housing First teams. Once someone is referred to Housing First, he or she is assigned one of the PATH housing first outreach specialists and a Housing First case manager to work with as the consumer waits to obtain housing. This partnership recognizes the unique skills of the outreach workers. Individuals who have been accepted into the Housing First program but have not yet been housed may be difficult to locate and engage, which is a key skill of PATH outreach workers. The PATH outreach workers continue to work with the Housing First residents and the ACT team after they obtain housing to assist in assuring a lasting transition.

Harris County, Texas

In Harris County, the Housing First program is a collaborative effort funded by grants and private donations. The housing was developed through a creative re-use of an old substance abuse treatment center. It is staffed with a case manager, a property manager, and a social service coordinator. Housing is permanent and the residents hold their own leases.

When the Harris County program was starting up, PATH was a natural partnership because the program aimed to serve individuals who were experiencing homelessness and mental illness, the very population that the PATH program serves. Once individuals are placed in housing, PATH staff provide transitional services to the residents, such as transportation and assistance with obtaining benefits. Because the PATH worker already has an existing relationship with residents, the case manager and PATH staff work together when issues arise. Once individuals are stable in housing, they are transitioned to a mainstream clinic for ongoing services.

Norfolk, Virginia

In May of 2006, the Norfolk Housing First program began with twelve individuals who moved into scattered housing over a period of several months. The program serves people experiencing chronic homelessness and serious mental illness, who have not recently engaged in mainstream mental health or substance use treatment and who have not been able to maintain traditional housing. Of the 12 initial residents who had an average of over 10 years of homelessness, almost all of them are still housed today. The team began with



The idea of Housing First programs is to start living independently. You have to be careful because you don't want residents to be too dependent on you. At the same time, you need to provide a lot of support in the beginning, because it is a big change in their lives.



— **Cherie Steinberg, LPC**

Program Director
Harris County, Texas

one case manager and one PATH worker but has grown to four case managers and a team leader. The program currently serves 23 individuals and expects to expand again. The PATH and Housing First teams are based in the same office and communicate regularly.

When Norfolk began Housing First, the PATH worker already had a relationship with many individuals and maintained that relationship as they began the transition to housing. Now that there are more Housing First staff, the plan is for PATH workers to identify individuals for the program and introduce them to the Housing First team during outreach visits. The PATH workers will continue the relationship to ensure that the transition is successful, and will continue to provide access to income and benefits through their SSI/SSDI Outreach, Access, and Recovery (SOAR) services. The Housing First program is building an ACT team to provide additional support services.

Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley, Wisconsin

At Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley, Housing First was born out of the need to find a way to support individuals whose mental health conditions were too symptomatic for the local shelter. This scattered site program works with monthly rental hotels to provide housing. Residents are expected to meet with their case manager and it is requested, but not required, that they remain sober. Due to the funding structure of this program, residents need to secure income in order to pay for the housing. If a resident is not actively looking for employment, he or she is only allowed to stay in the program through his or her second denial from Social Security. If the individual does obtain employment or benefits, he or she is allowed to remain in the program.

PATH is used in several different ways at this site. PATH supports one half-time case manager, provides psychiatric evaluations which help determine whether or not individuals are eligible for Social Security benefits, and provides one time rental assistance. The case manager meets with residents 4-6 hours a week, and the other half of the time he works in the shelter. The presence of a clinically trained PATH case manager is important for this program because the case manager has knowledge of the many issues that the individuals face, such as mental health, substance use, histories of interaction with the

“Housing First has housed people who I’ve known to be on the streets for twenty years. These were people that the community gave up on because their symptoms were so severe and they had not been able to stabilize in housing. These residents have proven everyone wrong. They are living in housing, and our retention rate is phenomenal. The first 12 Housing First residents were from referrals I made and they were probably 12 of the most symptomatic people that I knew. They weren’t going to get well on the streets and housing is what made their recovery possible.”

— Pamela Davis

PATH Homeless Project Coordinator
Norfolk, Virginia

criminal justice system, problems with credit and rental history, and previous difficulties with employment. This knowledge helps the PATH case manager better support individuals in their recovery around these issues.

TIPS FROM PATH PROGRAMS FOR WORKING WITH HOUSING FIRST

Educate your staff and community about the principles of Housing First

The main idea behind Housing First is that once individuals are in housing and have their basic needs met, they can truly begin their road to recovery. Treatment should not be a precondition to housing. This may be a difficult concept for some homeless service providers and stakeholders to grasp. In Housing First programs, housing is not used as leverage for treatment compliance, and once individuals are in housing everything possible is done to help them maintain it. If you take the time to educate those around you about the principles and proven results of Housing First programs, you will be able to gain more support for your program.

Visit existing programs and seek out mentors

While Housing First programs come in all different shapes and sizes, working with an established program, or two, can be incredibly helpful. The opportunity to learn from others' experiences and toss ideas around with them on an ongoing basis is invaluable. Hamilton County had the opportunity to work directly with Pathways, while the Norfolk program worked with two established programs for guidance and consultation.

Meet people where they are

Meeting people where they are is a vital principle for outreach, and it does not end once someone obtains housing. One of the main principles of the Housing First model is that it is a low barrier service. Many Housing First residents may not be ready to engage fully in mainstream services. Whether an individual is

sleeping on the floor because he or she is not used to a bed or his or her goal is to stay sober for just one day, it is imperative to recognize and build on these small steps. Once people feel secure in housing, even those who seem to be the most difficult to engage often begin to make changes to improve their lives.

Plan to address the cultural transition from the streets to housing

Some problems that new Housing First programs face can be avoided by recognizing the different skill sets that are required to live in housing and on the streets. One of the common problems that Housing First programs face is doubling up. Once housed, individuals may want to share their good fortune with others they may have left behind on the streets. This is a perfectly reasonable behavior for those of us who have our own homes or apartments but is often considered inappropriate, and sometimes grounds to be kicked out, in Housing First programs. Another problem is hoarding. When an individual is living on the street the individual may not know when there will be another opportunity to eat or get a newspaper. Staff should be trained to recognize the stages of change and how to provide support for this transition. Staff training should include addressing underlying causes of behavior.

Plan to assist residents with social connectedness and community integration

Housing First serves individuals who, for a variety of reasons, have not been successful in traditional housing. When experiencing chronic homelessness, life is about survival, and large amounts of energy are put into fulfilling

basic needs. Homelessness often becomes a central part of one's identity when living on the streets. Once housed, individuals may have more free time than they know what to do with. The homelessness that defined them for so long is no longer part of who they are. Programs should consider making sure that there are services and activities in place to keep residents moving forward. Some possibilities include volunteering, taking classes, gaining employment skills, joining community sports leagues, and attending community events.

Help staff balance PATH and Housing First roles

Many Housing First programs utilize street outreach workers as case managers when their projects begin, but quickly find that this additional duty puts a strain on their PATH outreach responsibilities. Other programs have PATH workers who conduct outreach both as part of the PATH team and the Housing First team. It is important to find a way to balance these roles and help them see that they are an important piece of both teams without making them feel that they are torn between two jobs. Self-care is especially important for staff who balance multiple roles.

Make sure you can meet the residents' case management needs

Staying on top of Housing First caseloads is incredibly difficult, especially when a PATH worker is doing double-duty as a Housing First case manager and street outreach worker. Without enough case management time, a program is likely to experience a high rate of turnover because new Housing First residents often need an intense level of support. When

“*PATH has been the key to our success with Housing First. If you are housing people who have homelessness so ingrained in their personal experience, you rely on the outreach specialists to be able to really make a difference with them. You can't all of the sudden say “these are your case managers and you now have responsibilities in the housing program” and expect it to work.*”

— **Debbie DeMarcus**

Supervisor of Homeless Services
Hamilton County, Ohio

an individual first obtains housing, visits need to be frequent to ensure a smooth transition. Once an individual has stabilized, the need for meetings may decline dramatically. It is important to create a balanced caseload with residents at several different stages so there isn't too much, or too little, work at any given time.

Build strong relationships with landlords

Whether your housing is a Single Room Occupancy program that uses local hotels or you have scattered site housing, developing relationships with housing management and landlords is crucial for the sustainability of your program. Sometimes it is difficult to find landlords who are willing to work with you,

but once they see that the program can be an intermediary when problems come up, landlords often see a mutual benefit. It is important not to rely on one provider for scattered site housing in case a problem arises with contracting or leasing. In Wisconsin, the Housing First program works with multiple sites. When one of their sites was unable to provide proper documentation, they already had relationships with three other locations and were able to provide residents with uninterrupted housing.

Consider creative leasing arrangements

One possible approach to working with landlords is *master leasing*. In this situation, the lease is in the agency's name when the individual initially moves in. Once the housing placement is deemed stable the landlord transfers the lease to the individual's name. This creates permanent housing without the individual having to move to another unit that is not sponsored by the agency. Master leasing is particularly useful for quick move-ins and to provide housing for individuals who would have difficulty qualifying for a lease on their own. (HomeBase, 2008)

Blend funding sources and create collaborations

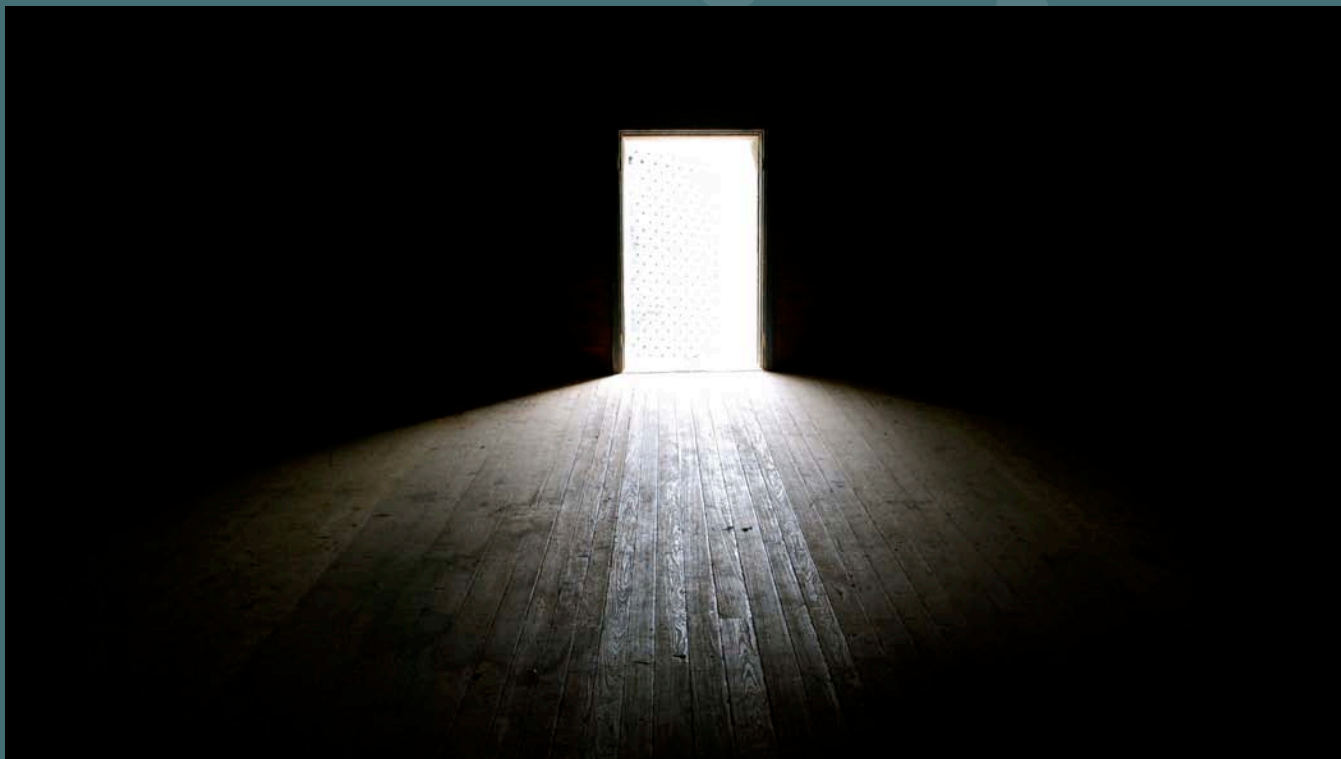
While it would be wonderful to be able to offer everything under one roof all of the time, funding is often a barrier. Several PATH programs that work with Housing First have found unique and creative ways to generate funding and provide services. Elliott Community Human Services utilizes PATH funded shelter specialists as screeners, HUD subsidies for the housing, and Medicaid for most of the



case management services. In Norfolk, the program blends funding from the Community Development Block Grant, HUD Homeless funding through the Continuum of Care, and a grant from a local hospital foundation. Beyond funding, relationships with local providers allow programs to provide services that they are not able to financially support. In Wisconsin, the PATH program works with a psychiatric provider who gives the program a discounted rate and is familiar with the issues of the residents, while the program in Harris County drew on local food pantries to keep their consumers' kitchens stocked.

WHERE TO GO FROM HERE

JEFF OLIVET



If you would like to start a Housing First program, a first challenge is to figure out how to secure funding. There are several creative ideas in this document, and talking to Housing First programs in your state will provide information about the nuances of funding streams in your area. In addition to talking to programs, make arrangements to visit and see what they look like in action. Think about whether your program should be scattered or fixed site, and what existing services and supports you can utilize. Finally, garner community support and educate the community about Housing First before you begin the project. Make sure that stakeholders understand that this method does work and is effective in getting the most vulnerable individuals off of the streets.

If you already have a Housing First program, try to think of new ways to utilize community resources. Is there an employment program or job training center in your area? What about a community sports league or classes at the local recreation centers? Finding creative ways to engage Housing First residents in the community can be challenging if you don't know where to look and if you don't have funding to create these opportunities. Community bulletin boards or local community centers can be good places to start. Continue to talk to other Housing First programs, showcase your program at conferences and meetings, and act as a mentor to new programs. Keep the community educated by working with the media in your area to showcase results and promote awareness of program successes.

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In Housing First, you have to start off slowly with simple and concrete goals that are reasonable and obtainable. If you are working with someone who puts 85% of their energy into staying clean then maybe that's the only goal for six months. Not expecting them to stay clean, get a job, and apply for Social Security all at once. You have to take it at the pace that will work for them.



— Randy Krueger
Case Manager

Emergency Shelter of the Fox Valley, Wisconsin

RESOURCES

Websites

Pathways to Housing

In 1992 Sam Tsemberis founded Pathways to Housing, pioneering the Housing First model. Pathways conducts research studies and provides trainings around the country to help communities implement the Housing First model. The program also encourages other Housing First programs to visit and learn from their experiences. The organization's website has more information about training and links to many of their publications.

Direct Link: <http://www.pathwaystohousing.org>

Corporation for Supportive Housing “Housing First Presentation Resource Material Page”

Here you can find materials presented at workshops by CSH of Michigan in 2007.

Direct Link:

<http://www.csh.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=Page.viewPage&pageId=4110&nodeID=90>

HomeBase

This page of the HomeBase website provides information on master leasing, which can be an effective approach for Housing First programs.

Direct Link: http://www.homebaseccc.org/pages/Hot_Topics/masterleasing.htm

Fact Sheets and Reports

NAEH “What is Housing First?” Fact Sheet

This fact sheet is a quick overview of information on Housing First programs.

Direct Link: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1425>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33120>

NAEH “Frequently Asked Questions about Housing First for Individuals and Families”

This is a great resource that clearly explains some common questions about Housing First. The document ends with a list of questions that are important to consider when developing

a new Housing First program or revisiting your philosophy.

Direct Link: <http://www.endhomelessness.org/content/article/detail/1424>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33121>

HUD “The Applicability of Housing First Models to Homelessness Persons with Serious Mental Illness”

This HUD report focuses specifically on models for people with Serious Mental Illness and addresses the issues that may arise when advocating for low barrier housing. It provides background information on Housing First, summaries of several Housing First programs, and the results of a research study with information about clients, housing tenure, and outcomes.

Direct Link: <http://www.huduser.org/publications/homeless/hsgfirst.html>

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33122>

HUD “Three Decades of Housing Data”

This Research Works issue discuss changes in the availability of housing, an example of how to used mixed financing to make housing available, ways that “lean production” can be applied to the development of housing, and a basic overview of Housing First.

Direct Link:

http://www.huduser.org/periodicals/Researchworks/decjan_08/RW_vol5num1t4.html#t4

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33344>

Home and Healthy for Good: A Statewide Pilot Housing First Program

The Massachusetts Housing and Shelter Alliance’s (MHSA) annual report provides background information about the project and estimates on cost savings.

Direct Link: http://www.mhsa.net/matriarch/documents/HHG_July_2008_Report_final.pdf

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33123>

Pathways to Housing 2007 Annual Report

The Pathways 2007 annual report provides historical information about the program, consumer testimonies, and recent outcomes.

Direct Link:

http://www.Pathwaystohousing.org/Articles/PTHPublications/FINAL_AnnualReport_2007.pdf

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33124>

Resources from the PATH TA Center

Outreach and the Housing First Model:

Offering Housing during the First Contact by Outreach

In 2004, the PATH TA Center conducted a teleconference that addressed Housing First issues specific to PATH. Topics included the Continuum of Care, Housing First program requirements, treatment to provide after housing, tips for developing a Housing First model, the relationship between outreach and Housing First, and the challenges of Housing First.

Homelessness Resource Center Record:

<http://homeless.samhsa.gov/Resource/View.aspx?id=33125>

Thank you to the other PATH programs who

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- Patricia Bann, Prince William County Community Service Board, VA
- Rosanne Norwood, American Red Cross, WI

WHAT IS PATH?

Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness

The PATH Program—or Projects for Assistance in Transition from Homelessness—was authorized by the Stewart B. McKinney Homeless Assistance Amendments Act of 1990. PATH funds community-based outreach, mental health and substance abuse services, case management, and limited housing services for people experiencing serious mental illnesses—including those with co-occurring substance use disorders—who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of becoming homeless.

PATH funds stimulate state & local contributions

PATH funds are worth more than their face value because they are matched with state and local resources. For every \$3 in federal funds, state or local agencies must put forward \$1 in cash or in-kind services. At a minimum, a \$52 million Federal allocation would result in a \$17 million match. In some states PATH funds and the state and local match are the only resources specifically for serving people experiencing homelessness and mental illnesses.



PATH providers deliver innovative services

PATH providers work with service delivery systems and embrace practices that work. These include:

- Partnering with housing first and permanent supportive housing programs
- Providing flexible consumer-directed and recovery-oriented services to meet consumers where they are in their recovery
- Employing consumers or providing consumer-run programs
- Partnering with health care providers, including Health Care for the Homeless to integrate mental health and medical services
- Assertively improving access to employment
- Improving access to benefits, especially through SSI/SSDI Outreach, Advocacy, and Recovery (SOAR)
- Using technology such as PDAs, electronic records, and HMIS

PATH providers are strong community partners

PATH providers and State Contacts are involved in local and regional planning efforts to end homelessness, including Continuum of Care, 10-Year Plans to End Homelessness, and other planning efforts. PATH providers and State Contacts work to ensure that services are coordinated and available to people experiencing homelessness.

For more information about PATH, please visit <http://pathprogram.samhsa.gov>



August 3, 2009

A decorative graphic consisting of a cluster of orange dots, arranged in a shape that resembles a stylized 'P' or a path, located to the left of the word "PATH".

PATH

Projects for Assistance in
Transition from Homelessness